WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1   1.   A system for linking together digital information objects of
2 a digital information space comprising:
3   an overlay created by a user, the overlay maintained separate from
4 the digital information objects;
5   at least one concept node within the overlay, each concept node
6 expressing a concept, each concept described by at least one keyword;
7   at least one information node within the overlay, each information
8 node representing one of the digital information objects, each information node
9 linkable to each concept node; and
10   a user interface in communication with the overlay and the digital
11 information space, the user interface operative to
12   (a)   accept at least one keyword from the user describing the concept of
13   any concept node,
14   (b)   accept input from the user indicating a digital information object in
15   the digital information space to be accessed,
16   (c)   display contents of the accessed digital information object, and
17   (d)   display at least one user-selectable link associated with each keyword
18   common to both the displayed contents of the accessed digital
19   information object and to any concept described by the keyword, the
20   user-selectable link providing access to another digital information
21   object in the digital information space.

1   2.   The system of claim 1 wherein the other digital information
2 object to which access is provided is represented by an information node in the
3 overlay linked in the overlay to at least one concept node including the common
4 keyword.

1   3.   The system of claim 1 wherein the digital information space
2 is at least one from a set consisting of an Internet, an intranet, a desktop
3 environment, and an electronic mail environment.

1   4. The system of claim 1 wherein the overlay exists on a
2 computer of the user linked to an Internet and the digital information space
3 comprises the Internet.

1   5. The system of claim 1 wherein the at least one concept node
2 is a plurality of concept nodes and wherein the at least one information node is a
3 plurality of information nodes, the user interface further accepting user input
4 establishing a link between a first concept node and a second concept node, between
5 a selected concept node and a selected information node, and between a first
6 information node and a second information node.

1   6. The system of claim 1 wherein the user interface permits the
2 user to add a new information node to the overlay representing the accessed digital
3 information object.

1   7. The system of claim 6 wherein the user may annotate the
2 accessed digital information object by storing an annotation in the information node
3 representing the accessed digital information object.

1   8. The system of claim 1 wherein the overlay exists on at least
2 one server and overlay revisions are received by at least one client served by the
3 server.

1   9. The system of claim 8 wherein the at least one client is a
2 plurality of clients and wherein overlay revisions are published by the server to the
3 plurality of clients.

1   10. The system of claim 9 wherein the published revisions are
2 automatically accepted if received from a trusted client.

1   11. The system of claim 9 wherein the published revisions are
2 queued for review if received from an untrusted client.

1   12.   The system of claim 8 wherein the at least one information

2   node is a plurality of information nodes and wherein the server receives information

3   node usage statistics from the at least one client and prioritizes the plurality of

4   information nodes in the overlay based on the usage statistics.

1   13.   The system of claim 8 wherein the server receives

2   information node usage statistics from the at least one client and wherein each

3   information node is conditionally removed from the overlay based on the usage

4   statistics.

1   14.   The system of claim 1 wherein each concept is describable by

2   a Boolean combination of keywords.

1   15.   The system of claim 1 further comprising a plurality of

2   overlays, the user interface permitting at least one of the plurality of overlays to be

3   selected as an active overlay.

1   16.   The system of claim 1 wherein the overlay exists on a

2   computer of a first client and wherein updates to the overlay made by the first client

3   are received by one or more second clients.

1   17.   The system of claim 16 wherein the overlay of each second

2   client automatically implements the updates if the first client is a trusted source.

1   18.   The system of claim 16 wherein the overlay of each second

2   client queues the updates for review if the first client is an untrusted source.

1   19.   The system of claim 1 wherein the overlay is sent to at least

2   one search engine and wherein the overlay receives search results including at least

3   one information node for adding to the overlay.

1   20.   The system of claim 1 wherein the overlay is associated with
2   at least one news service and wherein the user interface displays news articles
3   provided by the news service based on at least one concept in the overlay.

1   21.   A method of user controlled, dynamic linking of digital
2   information objects in a digital information space, the method comprising:
3   creating an overlay distinct from any digital information object in the
4   digital information space;
5   accepting input from a user establishing at least one concept node in
6   the overlay, each concept node including at least one keyword phrase establishing
7   a concept, each keyword phrase including at least one keyword;
8   accepting input from a user establishing at least one information node
9   in the overlay, each information node representing a digital information object in the
10   digital information space, each information node associated with any concept node
11   including a concept common to both the information node and the concept node;
12   scanning the contents of a selected digital information object for any
13   keyword phrase included in each concept node; and
14   displaying a user-selectable link for each keyword phrase found in the
15   scanned contents, each user-selectable link providing access to at least one related
16   digital information object, wherein the information node representing each of the at
17   least one related digital information object is associated with at least one concept
18   node including at least one keyword phrase found in the scanned contents.

1   22.   The method of claim 21 further comprising prompting the user
2   to create an information node in the overlay representing the scanned digital
3   information object.

1   23.   The method of claim 21 further comprising exporting at least
2   a portion of the overlay for incorporation into a different overlay.

1   24.   The method of claim 21 further comprising exporting at least
2   a portion of the overlay for use by a search engine.

1   25.   The method of claim 21 further comprising exporting at least
2   a portion of the overlay for use by a news service.

1   26.   A method of sharing information linking together digital
2   information objects of a digital information space, the method comprising:
3   creating an overlay comprising at least one concept node, each
4   concept node expressing one concept;
5   accessing a digital information object in the digital information space;
6   establishing a link between the digital information object and each
7   concept node expressing at least one concept commonly expressed by the digital
8   information object and the concept node; and
9   exporting the at least one concept node from the overlay for use in
10   at least one other overlay.

1   27.   The method of claim 26 wherein exporting comprises sending
2   the at least one exported concept node to at least one user subscribing to receive
3   exported nodes.

1   28.   The method of claim 26 wherein exporting comprises sending
2   the at least one exported concept node to a central server serving a plurality of
3   users.

1   29.   The method of claim 26 further comprising:
2   creating an information node in the overlay representing an accessed
3   digital information object; and
4   exporting the information node for use in at least one other overlay.

1   30.   A system for linking together digital information objects of
2   a digital information space comprising:
3   at least one overlay maintained outside of the digital information
4   space, at least a portion of the at least one overlay passed to an agent for information
5   processing;

6   at least one concept node within each overlay, each concept node

7 expressing one concept, each concept defined by at least one keyword; and

8   at least one information node within each overlay, each information

9 node representing one of the digital information objects;

10   wherein a link between an accessed digital information object in the

11 digital information space and each of the at least one concept node is established by

12 the user if the accessed digital information object and the overlay include at least one

13 common concept.

1   31. The system of claim 30 wherein information processing

2 comprises generating a list of new potential information nodes based on any portion

3 of the at least one overlay passed to the agent.

1   32. The system of claim 30 wherein information processing

2 comprises creating a customized news collection based on any portion of the at least

3 one overlay passed to the agent.